DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 036 636 VT 010 300

AUTHOR DORAN, KENNETH T.
TITLE CO-EXISTENCE OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL.
PUB DATE 24 OCT 69
NOTE 8P.; PRESENTATION FOR PANEL DISCUSSION, AMERICAN TECHNICAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION REGIONAL CONFERENCE (HUDSON VALLEY COMMUNITY COLL., OCTOBER 24, 1969)

EDRS PRICE EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.50
DESCRIPTORS *COLLEGE ROLE, *COMMUNITY COLLEGES, COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS, EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY, EQUAL EDUCATION, EQUAL FACILITIES, SPEECHES, *STATE COLLEGES, TECHNICAL EDUCATION, *VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHERS
IDENTIFIERS *STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, SUNY

ABSTRACT

HISTORICALLY THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION BOTH INSTITUTIONALLY AND PROGRAMATICALLY WITHIN INSTITUTIONS HAS BEEN ADAPTABLE ENOUGH TO ALLOW THE CO-EXISTENCE OF THE MOST DIVERSE INSTITUTIONAL FORMS AND CURRICULAR PROGRAMS. IN 1953, PUBLIC 2-YEAR COLLEGES IN NEW YORK STATE WERE ENCOURAGED TO GET RID OF THEIR 1-YEAR VOCATIONAL CURRICULUMS AND TO CONFINE THEMSELVES TO 2-YEAR CURRICULUMS TO PREPARE TECHNICIANS. BUT THE 1963 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT SEEMED TO BE A CLEAR MANDATE FOR 2-YEAR COLLEGES TO UNDERTAKE WORK OF THE LESS-THAN-2-YEAR VARIETY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND, IN 1965, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (SUNY) BOARD OF TRUSTEES, ON CHANCELLOR GOULD'S RECOMMENDATION, APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE EXPANSION INTO SUB-TECHNICAL AREAS. THE OFFICIAL POSITION WITHIN SUNY SINCE THEN HAS BEEN THAT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION MUST ENJOY PARITY OF ESTEEM WITH UNIVERSITY-PARALLEL EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC 2-YEAR COLLEGES. VOCATIONAL FACULTY AND STUDENTS CAN AND MUST CO-EXIST ON THE CAMPUSES. THE TEACHER'S RELATIVE STATUS SHOULD BE DEPENDENT UPON HIS KNOWLEDGE OF HIS FIELD AND HIS TEACHING COMPETENCE--NO MATTER HOW EITHER WAS ACQUIRED. THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF ALL TAXPAYERS MUST HAVE EQUAL TREATMENT AS STUDENTS. AND WHO IS TO SAY THAT THE VOCATIONAL PROGRAM STUDENT WILL NOT RETURN LATER TO WORK TOWARD AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE, A BACHELOR'S DEGREE, OR EVEN HIGHER DEGREES? (JK)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

CO-EXISTENCE OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

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Kenneth T. Doran

Opening Presentation for Panel Discussion
American Technical Education Association
Regional Conference
Hudson Valley Community College
October 24, 1969

Can you think of a time in the history of American secondary and higher education when there was not at least one major problem of curricular or institutional co-existence on the academic scene? Can Program Y co-exist with Program Z? Can institutional type P co-exist with Q? Let us take a few moments to reflect on this question.

Was there such a time of non-strife in the earliest days when Harvard stood alone on the college scene? --or was not her original curriculum to prepare learned clergymen under attack from the beginning as being too narrow and not producing the generally cultured man of secular affairs?

Was it a tranquil period in secondary education after the mid-18th century when Benjamin Franklin introduced the academy idea in these colonies? --or isn't it true that these institutions so overlapped the colleges that in New York State Regent L' Hommedieu made a serious but unsuccessful effort to have academies and colleges placed on an equal legal footing in the awarding of bachelor of arts degrees?

Was it untroubled in the early 19th century when the straight classical curriculum--Latin and Greek "gerund grinding" as the students complained--seemed to reign supreme and unchallenged? --or isn't it true that the elective principle fought its way into the picture at Harvard and at Union and other leading institutions of the day? --and vocational subjects such as bookkeeping and surveying and navigation appeared in the academy curriculum in New York State? --and Stephen Van Rensselaer's Polytecnnic Institute here in Troy found engineering so unacceptable to conventional academicians that President Eaton

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had to arrogate his own degree-granting powers--the so-called "B.S. Rensselaer," because the Legislature would not authorize proper degree-granting powers?

Were there no problems of co-existence in the mid-19th century, with the public high school vying to oust the private academy as the dominant institution of secondary education? --and there began to be strange heretical mutterings about admitting agriculture and mechanic arts to the college curriculum, and Cornell and other land grant colleges came into being on this broadened curricular scheme?

Was it a time of peaceful co-existence at the turn of the current century when the junior college idea was just taking root and so many eminent educational powers were doing all within their capabilities to stunt its growth?

Was there no problem of co-existence in 1922 when a graduate dean appeared before the National Association of State Universities and delivered himself of these views? --"To furnish at /the junior college/ level a natural and dignified stopping place for those who here reach their natural limits, ample practical courses should be provided in these years, as finishing courses....Where these courses are best adapted in preparation for entering upon home life, business, or industry...the course /is/ really liberal from the point of view of preparation for an occupation." Dean Carl Seashore of the University of Iowa went on with his defense of the new concept of terminal education in the two-year colleges in 1922: "The man who fought to the last ditch for the hard shell education as the only higher education worth while is still in evidence and exclaims, 'What has become of liberal education?' The answer is it has become more liberal."

Were there no problems of co-existence in New York State in 1938 when the Regents' Inquiry report stated that "New York is adequately supplied with private colleges, universities, and public and private professional schools...." and recommended, therefore, that we "appropriate no state funds for the establishment

of any state-wide system of 'junior colleges,' or of a state university...."?

And to get closer to the question at hand, what about in 1953 when your speaker went out as the State Education Department's accreditation representative and told such colleges as the Agricultural and Technical College at Morrisville that it should get rid of its one-year curriculums in watchmaking and jewelry engraving because there was no proper place in these colleges for vocational education--for trade education? We told them that they should confine themselves to the two-year curriculums preparing technicians. Vocational education, we said, was not "collegiate" (whatever that meant then, or means now).

Well, what is the point of all this elaborate build-up? It must be obvious that we are pointing to the simple conclusion that the American educational organization both institutionally and programmatically within institutions has been adaptable enough to allow of the co-existence of the most diverse institutional forms and the most diverse curricular programs within institutions. We have an institution like R.P.I. starting as a trade school without degree powers, now a highly renowned engineering and science institution, offering the Ph.D., and yet offering broad humanities and social science concentrations as well. We have Cornell University offering a range from a short course in blacksmithing, through hotel keeping, to the Ph.D. in the most abstruse branches of philosophy. We have this institution which is our host today, starting as a veterans vocational school after World War II, dropping the trade courses in 1953 upon conversion to a technical institute, adding the liberal arts and the associate in arts degree in 1961, and today offering the complete array of programs characteristic of the comprehensive community college which we now regard as our ideal: the university-parallel programs leading to the A.A. and A.S. designed to prepare the student for transfer to an upper-division program, the occupational programs leading to the A.A.S. designed to prepare the student for entry upon a technician-level career, the occupational programs of less-than-two-years' duration leading to

diplomas or certificates and designed to prepare the graduate for career entry as an artisan.

What happened between 1953 and the present day to account for the fact that technical and vocational programs are now asked to co-exist harmoniously in our public two-year colleges whereas formerly it was our official posture that the vocational programs had no place--were not "collegiate?" First, may I point out that New York State paid rather dearly for maintaining the position that even its technical work was collegiate in character after the enactment of the National Defense Education Act in 1958. N.D.E.A. provided Federal funds for technical work if it was of "less than college grade." The junior colleges in California and some other states cashed in on N.D.E.A. because these junior colleges originated as extensions of the high school, and retaining this legal status, therefore, could claim that for N.D.E.A. purposes they were of "less than college grade." New York insisted on the higher education character of its public and private junior colleges, however, and paid the price.

Back to the original question--how did vocational education get back into our community colleges and agricultural and technical colleges? The history can be told quite briefly. In February, 1961, President Kennedy's message to Congress suggested intensive study of vocational-technical education and in due time there was set up an executive panel of consultants on vocational education, chaired by Supt. Willis of Chicago. The final fruit of the work of this panel was the enactment of the Vocational Education Act of 1963. This Act authorized vocational education programs for, among others, those out of high school available for full-time study in preparation for entering the labor market, persons who were unemployed or underemployed and needed training or retraining, and persons who had academic, socio-economic or other handicaps. Here it seemed to us in State University was a clear mandate to the two-year colleges to undertake work of the less-than-two-year variety in the field of vocational

education.

In February, 1964, the Board of Regents issued a statement of policy on the comprehensive community college. Two of the five functions identified as characterizing a comprehensive community college were: occupational or terminal education and adult or continuing education.

The next development was a memorandum addressed by Chancellor Gould to the State University Board of Trustees in November, 1965. Doctor Gould reviewed the background of the vertical comprehensiveness issue, pointing out that the ruling curricular philosophy in our early institutions called for their programs to be of two years' duration and of technical career character, but that now there was mounting pressure to offer programs of less-than-two-years' duration in the area known formerly as vocational education. He requested the Board of Trustees, therefore, to approve in principle the expansion of program into sub-technical areas. This request was related directly to the emerging development of a vocational education program to be offered at Wellsville by the Agricultural and Technical College at Alfred. The Board of Trustees accepted Chancellor Gould's recommendation and granted the approval in principle at their December 1965 meeting.

This has been our official posture ever since. Vocational education should and must enjoy parity of esteem with university-parallel education and technical education in our public two-year colleges.

But really, some ask, does it now enjoy parity of esteem everywhere in your system, or is it necessarily inevitable that it will--ever? To the first question, I have to respond clearly "no." There is Hudson Valley Community College, as I've indicated, which is completely comprehensive and there are others which approach this ideal in varying degrees--but everywhere in our system? --clearly no. Why not? Well, bluntly, there are men of good will in both administration and faculty who disavow our claim of relative equality among the branches of learning. They cling to the hierarchical notions that

philosophy is necessarily better than history--history than sociology--any humanities or social sciences better than any natural sciences--any natural science better than business administration--business administration preferable to being that horrid term "an educationist" -- and so it goes down the pecking order. I heard a social scientist put it in its most biting terms when he said to another faculty member, "Old boy, how would you like to have a professor of meat cutting sitting on the college curriculum committee with you? How does that grab you?" Now think back to the series of questions of historical co-existence with which I began. Can't you hear the early Latin professor speaking to the Greek professor and down through the years other members of the then-current establishment substituting for "meat cutting": "chemistry," "engineering," "agriculture," "business," "education," "journalism," "electrical technology," "automotive mechanics," etc., etc., etc.? And yet in terms of meeting human needs, where do Latin and Greek rank in the educational spectrum today, vis-à-vis these others? Can it be that some of us are taking John Gardner seriously when he says in effect that if we agree to teach philosophy because it is academically prestigious but not to teach plumbing because it has been academically nonprestigious, we run the risk that neither our theories nor our pipes will hold water?

But contrasting philosophy--a branch of the humanities--with plumbing as vocational education is removing the argument from our assigned context. Can Electrical Technology faculty--men, perhaps, with electrical engineering or natural science degrees--co-exist harmoniously on the same campus with vocational instructors who perhaps came up through apprenticeship or on-the-job training with no college degrees at all? Of course they can. I've seen it work personally in my own teaching days and it works on some of our campuses right now. The acid tests for a teacher of any subject are his knowledge of his field and his

teaching competence--no matter how either is acquired. A faculty member's relative status on campus should relate to his demonstrated competence and to no other artificial criteria. The superior welding instructor should enjoy superior status to the mediocre mechanical technology instructor and the poor psychology teacher. I cannot be more emphatic about this. In a comprehensive public community college, fancied hierarchical notions about subject matter should have no bearing on faculty status. And to the second part of the earlier question, do I believe it necessarily inevitable that vocational education will enjoy parity of esteem at any future time, I say yes, I do believe this. And I state the belief not to be Pollyanna but to affirm my faith that history will repeat itself in American higher education. Vocational education will fully validate its right to co-existence just as engineering, agriculture, business, etc., etc., did on the university scene.

What about co-existence of technical and vocational students on the same campus? Should vocational students be physically segregated from the technical, the pre-professional, and the liberal arts students? This question was put to our office on one occasion by one of the presidents. He said that his faculty was considering moving towards our State University master plan objectives of open-door admissions and comprehensive curricular offerings but he sensed their feeling that vocational education students should be physically separated from the "regular" students (by which he meant associate degree students). How did we feel about this? he asked. We lost no time in expressing our feelings, rooted in the same spirit of egalitarianism which has characterized my previous remarks. No separate facilities, no second-class faculty, no restrictions on participation in student government and activities, no separate graduation ceremonies, etc., etc. In addition to the general merits of the case for equal treatment of all taxpayers' sons and daughters who are admitted to our

hopefully open-door colleges, there is the relatively new career-ladder concept. The high school graduate who, this year, tries his wings in a one-year vocational certificate program may very well come back two years hence after work experience and build on towards an associate degree and then later take further steps up the career ladder towards a bachelor's and even higher degrees. Who is to say then that during that first year of vocational education he is chaff to be carefully separated from the wheat?

To sum up and conclude, then. It is our belief in the Office of Two-year Colleges, SUNY, that current manpower and other societal demands require us to have community colleges which are comprehensive in their curricular offerings: university-parallel, occupational-technical, and occupational-vocational. The three types of curriculum, the three types of faculty, the three types of student--they can co-exist harmoniously--they must--we believe they will.